

**METHOD OF PROVIDING EXTENDED SHELF
LIFE FRESH MEAT PRODUCTS**

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method of providing extended shelf life fresh meat products involves irradiating the meat products in a first controlled atmosphere and packaging the irradiated meat products in a second controlled atmosphere. The packaged irradiated meat products are then distributed to a retail store. In an exemplary embodiment, the first controlled atmosphere excludes oxygen and the second controlled atmosphere is high in oxygen. In one particular embodiment of the present invention, an antioxidant is added to the meat products either prior to or following the step of irradiating the meat products in the first controlled atmosphere, to extend the color-life of the meat products.